

# Forest Fire Smoke and Your Health

Wildfire smoke can harm your health. During heavy smoke events, even healthy individuals can experience eye and throat irritation, coughing, or shortness of breath.

## Who is at risk?

People with asthma, heart disease, or other respiratory conditions can experience worsening symptoms even in light smoke. During heavy smoke events, everyone is at risk.

## How do I protect myself?

Everyone, especially those at higher risk, should monitor their symptoms, take appropriate precautions, and seek medical care if symptoms worsen. During a smoke event:

- Reduce or avoid strenuous outdoor activities, especially if you experience symptoms such as coughing, throat irritation, or shortness of breath. Children, older adults, and people with pre-existing medical conditions (such as heart or lung disease) should be especially cautious.
- Do not rely on dust masks, bandanas, or cloths (even if wet). These are not designed to protect your lungs from smoke. Well-fitted respirators (e.g., N95) provide the most effective protection from fine particulate matter (PM2.5). A proper fit is important; facial hair can reduce effectiveness.
- Stay indoors and reduce exposure to outdoor air by closing windows and doors and adjusting ventilation or air-conditioning systems so they do not bring outdoor air indoors (set to recirculate if possible).
- If your home is not adequately protected from smoke, consider going to an air-conditioned public space (e.g., mall, library, community center, or place of worship) to reduce smoke exposure.
- If you have a HEPA air cleaner, use it to reduce small particles in indoor air and spend as much time as possible in the room where it is operating.
- Avoid tobacco smoke exposure. Smoking places additional stress on your lungs and increases health risks for those around you.

## Where can I go for more information?

- The Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency (SPSA) is responsible for provincial emergency management, fire safety and wildfire management in Saskatchewan. For live air quality updates visit <https://www.saskpublicsafety.ca/>
- Get the [SaskAlert](#) app! Saskatchewan's Emergency Public Alerting program used to alert the public of an emergency in real-time. [Learn more about SaskAlert.](#)
- For information regarding Saskatchewan's Air Quality Index (AQI) visit the Government of Canada website <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/air-quality-health-index.html>
- Individuals experiencing symptoms can call Health Line at 811 to speak to a registered nurse. Health Line is available 24 hours a day.
- Visit Environment and Climate Change Canada for more information and resources on [wildfire smoke, air quality and your health](#)